



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **FRESH FROM FLORIDA'S SUNSHINE USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDES RURAL BUSINESS GRANT FUNDING TO LOW-CARB POTATO GROWERS**

PALATKA, FL, July 22, 2004 — Potatoes have long been recognized as one of the world's greatest foods, filled with calcium, niacin, iron and vitamin C. Potato skins are a good source of fiber, but there is trouble lurking beneath the skin — carbohydrates, and plenty of them. In today's health conscious society, if you subscribe to the increasingly popular notion that fat is the dieter's friend, carbohydrates such as bread and potatoes are dietary offenders.

As the low-carb trend becomes more ingrained in the American lifestyle, it comes as no surprise that millions of Americans plan on trying a low-carbohydrate diet in 2004. That's a lot of meat, and until now, very few potatoes. Surprising, since potatoes are America's most popular vegetable, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service who reports that the typical American consumes more than 140 pounds of spuds each year.

But five Florida potato growers operating as the SunFresh of Florida Marketing Cooperative, Inc., along with Chad Hutchinson, an assistant professor of horticulture at the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) hope to change the potato's maligned image. Hutchinson has been growing and testing the new variety of potato for five years at UF's Plant Science Research Unit in Hastings. Netherlands based seed company HZPC Americas Corporation developed the potato through crossbreeding. This imported tuber innovation will impress health conscious consumers and provide a boost to potato growers by decreasing the carbohydrate content of a potato by 30 percent, bringing the potato back to the dinnertable.

Helping to make the low carb potato a reality is USDA Rural Development. With financial assistance from Rural Development and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, it will be just a matter of time before these potatoes make it to grocery shelves. Rural Development provided \$95,000 in Rural Business Enterprise Grant funding to Floridan Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc. to help re-establish the dwindling potato market in Florida. A marketing campaign targeting wholesalers, retailers, food services and consumers will promote the newly developed potato as a fresh, high in vitamin C, high protein, and low carbohydrate food.

Growers and Rural Development representatives as well as local and state officials gathered today in East Palatka for a ceremonial check presentation. "Rural Development is pleased to provide funding for this exciting project," Rural Development State Director Charles W. Clemons, Sr. said. "Not only will the low-carb potato bring desirable options to the American consumer, it will energize Florida's potato industry with increased market share." Nationwide, potatoes are an important vegetable crop, contributing food and jobs to the American public. In addition to assisting the five growers, the low-carb potato will secure roughly 60 jobs associated with the venture.

USDA Rural Development is committed to the future of rural communities and is the lead Federal entity for rural development needs and administers financial and technical assistance through Rural Housing Programs, Rural Business-Cooperative Programs and Rural Utilities Programs. Further information on USDA Rural Development can be obtained by contacting any USDA Service Center or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/fl>

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